

problem is like the crew of the *Titanic* insisting on a 30 per cent wage increase before they drowned in the icy waters.

Mr. Peters: If they had done that they would still be alive.

Mr. Friesen: The point is, both are irrelevant. The object now is to save the ship, and to do that you must anticipate the problems. That is what we tried to do in 1974 in our party. The problem the government faces today is not simply one of the acceptance of the Anti-Inflation Board's program which they have proposed; it is basically a problem of credibility. When it comes down to the nub of the question, nobody believes them any more.

● (2350)

Why does it take so long for the federal government and provincial governments, and the federal government, organized labour and other elements of the economy, to come to agreements? Surely the reason is that various segments of the economy do not know how they stand with the government. The government's credibility is in question.

In 1974 I well remember the Prime Minister saying to this country's workers, "The Conservatives will freeze your wages." Today the workers of Canada remember what the Prime Minister said in the 1974 election campaign and wonder, "Can we believe this guy any longer." At the same time the NDP "conned" the workers into believing they could ask for ever larger pieces of the pie without increasing productivity. The workers kept asking for more; there was always more to be had from where the last increase came.

If one considers the meaning of the term "collective bargaining" at its face value, one must concede that the motion before the House has some validity. When the government establishes what the wage settlement of workers shall be, there can be no bargaining. When it establishes unilaterally the terms of an agreement, there can be no collective solution. The very terms "collective bargaining" and "administrator" in this context are mutually exclusive. Logically, the Minister of Labour is redundant, a vestigial organ of government. Who needs the Minister of Labour when there is no longer effective bargaining?

The government's program lacks credibility. It should be noted that the Prime Minister has never made a speech in this House on the anti-inflation program. He has spoken across the country on this subject, but never once in this House. We wonder if he really serious if he is not willing to face parliament on this most critical part of the government's program.

The second problem is this: the government lacks consistency in its actions. Today the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) announced spending increases of not more than 16 per cent; but worker's wage settlements are supposed to be not more than 10 per cent. Where is the government's consistency in asking the workers to accept not more than 10 per cent when it, itself, will spend an extra 16 per cent?

Let me allude to another area of inconsistency. Not long ago the House passed Bill C-71 to do with the reformation of the Criminal Code. Features in that legislation were

Labour Conditions

long overdue. Now the government proposes to introduce a bill ensuring greater peace and security. If the government is so concerned about the ideal of justice for everyone in the land, why not extend justice to those in labour engaged in collective bargaining? Why not introduce legislation which will guarantee the right of appeal for workers involved in the bargaining process? On the one hand the government says its program is voluntary; on the other, the program itself encourages the opposition of adversaries and class confrontation.

The Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) was quite right when he said that collective bargaining ought to involve human relations, ought to involve a process in which men and women of good will sit down at the bargaining table, discuss matters of mutual interest and try to come to a reasonable, sensible, and sensitive resolution of their problems. Really this is a matter involving human relations. But you can only bargain if the men and women involved in the bargaining process consider themselves as equals. If one side is waving a club over the head of the other, it is no longer a matter of human relations. If one side has an advantage over the other, again there will not be that element of human relations. Human relations are not involved when there is but a single dimension, a single party, in the bargaining process. There must be provision for recourse to an impartial judge and jury made up to the peers of the parties, who can adjudicate on the situation.

The NDP motion says nothing for the 80 per cent of our work force which has never enjoyed bargaining rights or never entered into collective agreements. Is not the NDP position specious? Why is the party so worked up about that part of the labour force which has been organized some time and engaged in collective bargaining, and not greatly worked up about the rest of the work force, about those who have never been guaranteed these rights and who, so to speak, have been disenfranchised in the labour force? I am led to believe that the socialists are exercised about the matter because the vested interests of the party coincide with the interests of the group they defend, and there will be implications concerning fund raising when the next election comes around.

I agree that the workers who have been on strike nearly one year face an impossible future and unnecessary hardship. As the Postmaster General said, if the parties to the dispute had sat down together and discussed the matter in a human way, in a way involving human relations, the situation would never have come to this pass. There must be other ways of resolving this problem. There has been greed on one side and stubbornness on the other, and we know the result.

I suggest that our plight is serious and that the motion before the House has merit. One could criticize the government for many of the shortcomings of its program. For that reason I ask government supporters to bring pressure to bear on the cabinet and ask the cabinet to introduce a bill which will ensure that the country's workers will have recourse to justice. It is clear that at present there is no such recourse. I commend this action to hon. members on the government side. Let them take the subject matter of the motion under advisement, and let us see if we cannot introduce some righteousness to the way in which we treat the workers of our country.